

GCOA Quarterly Council Meeting

Minutes 01/22/2025

Council Member: Patti Lyons, Eve Anthony, Viki Johnson, Ruth Lee, Ashton Windham, Kenneth Brooks, Fred Watson, Mildred Schmelz, Pam Cushenan, Liz Schulze, Norman Jean Morgan, Adrienne Mims

Staff Present: Debra Stokes and Nicola Brown

Meeting Call to Order by Chairwoman Patti Lyons:

- Welcome and Introductions of New Council Members Pam Cushenan and Liz Schulze were done.
- An announcement of Ashley Burton's maternity leave, the resignation of the newly appointed Communications Specialist, and the passing of Joe Gavalis, veteran advocator for senior abuse, exploitation, scams, and neglect.

Executive and Committee Reports Briefs

Treasurer's Report – Ashton Windham:

Trust Fund Balance: \$103,334.61

Net Loss: (\$643.09)

Expenses: \$4,677.25

Operations Budget: Budget usage half-year (7/1/2024 to 12/31/2024) is 44.08% of the budget FYE 2025.

Q & A:

- State Budget will not pay the GCOA lobbyist, payment will be done through the Trust Fund.
- Funding for contracted staff support and media services will be funded by the State funds.
- Enquiry about GCOA Council Expense reimbursement will be followed up by Debra Stokes, and to ensure the right channel is being used for submission, time for processing and payment.

Motion to accept report moved by Mildred Schmelz and seconded by Norma Jean Morgan, the report was accepted.

Executive Directors Report – Debra Stokes

- Updates on the Legislative Sessions and communications with key committee chairs. Focusing on the Legislative priorities and the budget asks, the \$2.5 million for HCBS, Medicaid in Assisted Living Facilities, and MDT Coordinator.
- MAiD have received mixed reactions with Senator Rick Williams supporting a Study Committee, but Chairman Brass of the Rules Committee will not support this ask.
- Discussion on the Governor's Budget, the request for GCOA funding was not included in the Governor's Office budget.
- Update on the progress of the Capitol Ready Campaign, and the Senior Day Planning. Although there limited staffing work being done, there was no specific update on marketing and advertising on the website, newsletter and social media platforms.
- CO-AGE membership has increased, and it is forecasted to continue growing with the expansion of advocacy on all platforms and increased presence in Aging Services and Support. Debra Stokes Chaired the Aging Services Committee at the Behavioral Health and Innovation Commission, with emphasis on behavioral health coaching model in public housing.

CO-AGE Committee Report – Eve Anthony

- There were no CO-AGE meetings update was presented; the next scheduled meeting will be held July 16 -17, 2025. The decision was made not to hold a CO-AGE meeting before the Senior Day at the Capitol event.
- Clarifications made on the Capitol Ready campaign engagement with CO-AGE membership. Online correspondence is being sent to the members, there will not be an in-person meeting.

Legislative Committee Report – Viki Johnson and Debra Stokes

- Legislative Priorities were discussed and an update on the progress of each Work- Group activities.
- Updates on the Legislative Sessions and communications with key committee chairs. Focusing on the Legislative priorities and the budget asks, the \$2.5 million for HCBS, and MDT Coordinator.
- MAiD have received mixed reactions with Senator Rick Williams supporting a Study Committee, but Chairman Brass of the Rules Committee will not support this ask.

- Discussion on the request for a Study Committee for Medicaid in Assisted Living Facilities (an example of this facility is the Silver Birch Organization's model).
- Securing funding for non-Medicaid HCBS to reduce the waitlist for 1,400 seniors seeking services and resources.
- Supported Decision Making: the committee/workgroup is working on getting a Bill passed and for adjustments to guardianship.
- Discussion of the impact of a potential cut to Social Services and the PACE program.
- HB 1123 Bill and MDT Coordinator, the HB 1123 was vetoed by the Governor. There is a request for funding \$200,000, to establish a single MDT Coordinator for the State of Georgia, who will work with the existing MDTs, and to collect data to establish the effectiveness of the program.
- Consideration is being made to make recommendation to the Comprehensive Health Care Coverage Commission on the modification of skilled nursing facilities to incorporate person-centered care and household models of operations.

Senior Week Committee Report – Mildred Schmelz

- An update was given on the progress of the Senior Week and the Senior Day at the Capitol planning.
- Discussion included securing the venue, food, the program for the Distinguished Older Georgian, and other logistics
- Arrangements for accommodation and transportation for GCOA Council and Staff for Senior Day.
- Sourcing and purchasing of Scarves, tote bags, handheld signs.
- Volunteer recruitment and training.

DAS Update was cancelled and a new date to be set for the update

Action Items/New Business

- Send the training video on medical aid in dying to all council members.
- Check on the status of reimbursement requests submitted by Ruth and others.
- Update the registration list for Senior Day at the Capitol with the new contact from Forsyth senior services.
- Send out an email to confirm council members' attendance for dinner and hotel stay on February 10th.
- Reach out to local legislative delegations to coordinate photo opportunities with senior groups attending Senior Day.
- Organize a Doodle poll for Council members to schedule an update meeting with Mary Lee from DAS.

Meeting Adjourned